

215.41

Determining Household Size

Introduction

A household is a family or an economic unit composed of a person or group of persons, related or non-related, who usually (although not necessarily) live together, and whose production of income and consumption of goods or services are related. It is reasonable to assume that persons (other than those living in institutional settings and homeless facilities) living in the residences of others, whether related or not, are likely to be receiving support and some co-mingling of resources. This would render them members of the economic unit with which they live.

However, it is possible to establish that more than one economic unit lives under one roof. Appropriate questions will help make a reasonable determination whether there is general economic independence of the units (i.e., financial resources and support are retained independently). This section provides sample questions to assist local WIC agency personnel.

Note: Do not use a tax return to determine household size.

Definitions

For purposes of the WIC Program, the terms “household,” “economic unit” and “family” are used interchangeably.

Foster children

Ask the parent/guardian the following question:
Is the child the legal responsibility of DHS?

- If yes, count the child as a household of one (a separate income family).
- If no, count the child as a member of the household s/he resides with.

Note: A foster child can never confer adjunctive eligibility to the family with which the foster child resides.

A family member resides in an institution

Ask the parent/guardian the following question:
Do you pay financial support for the institutionalized person?

- If yes, include the person in the household size.
- If no, do not include the person in the household.

Note: The institutionalized family member is not eligible for WIC benefits.

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Children living with a parent other than the applicant

Physical custody situations vary among families. Therefore, each custody situation must be evaluated separately. Ask the following question:

Do you have court-ordered custody of the child?

- If yes, count the child as a member of the applicant's household.
- If no, do not count the child as a member of the applicant's household.

Note: It is strongly recommended that parents agree to share the WIC foods between the two households. However, if both parents insist on claiming benefits for their child, both households must be income-eligible for WIC services. This means that the child will be counted as a member in both households and must have two separate and complete records in the data system (i.e., one record associated with each family ID). This makes it challenging to manage certification appointments and data collection requirements, especially if the two households are in different WIC service areas. The food package must be tailored so that the child receives only one full food package per month. See Policy 235.01 for more information about tailoring food packages.

Children in temporary care of an adult

Sometimes children are left in the care of others or even abandoned. The table below provides examples of questions to help determine household size and whose income to count.

Note: Temporary care situations may make a child homeless according to the WIC definition. If so, document accordingly in the WIC data system so that the appropriate risk factor is assigned. Children in temporary care cannot be considered a household of one.

Question	Action
Do you receive any monetary compensation for having the child in your home?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If <u>yes</u>, the income source may provide adjunctive eligibility (FIP/TANF, Medicaid, etc.) • If <u>no</u>, ask the next question.
Is the child the legal responsibility of DHS?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If <u>yes</u>, the child should be considered a foster child with a household size of one (see the previous page). • If <u>no</u>, ask the next question.
Do you think anyone else has applied for WIC benefits for this child?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If <u>yes</u>, search the WIC database to see if the child is already enrolled. • If <u>no</u>, count everyone in the applicant's household and consider all income sources for the household.

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More than one household at an address

The table below provides examples of questions to help determine whether more than one household resides at the address.

Question	Action
Do you share income and expenses with the other people in the household?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If <u>yes</u>, count as one household. • If <u>no</u>, count as separate households. <p><u>Note:</u> Married couples cannot be separate households.</p>
Does the household provide you with free food, clothing, shelter, etc., with no expectation of payment or in-kind benefits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If <u>yes</u>, count as one household. • If <u>no</u>, ask the next question.
Do you pay the household for living in their home?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If <u>yes</u>, count as separate households. • If <u>no</u>, count as one household.

Homeless individuals

Individuals or families who have temporary accommodation in the residence of another individual are considered separate economic units, as are residents of a shelter or other facility for the homeless. See Policy 390.30 for more information about identifying and serving homeless participants.

Military personnel serving overseas

Military personnel serving overseas or assigned to a military base, even though they are not living with their families, should be considered members of the economic unit. The income received by the military individual(s), and all other income received by members of the economic unit should be counted as income to the household.

Note: If a military family's children live with other adults while the parents are on active duty, there are additional options for determining household size and income. Please call the state WIC office for more information about these options when an applicant presents with these circumstances.

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Applicants who are minors

It is rare for teenaged applicants who are living with their parents to be considered a separate household. The table below provides examples of questions to help determine whether more than one household resides at the address when the applicant is a minor (under 18 years old).

Questions	Action
Do you receive FIP/TANF , Medicaid or Food Assistance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If <u>yes</u>, count the teenager and any of her children as a separate household. • If <u>no</u>, ask the next question.
Do you live apart from your parents and other adults and work to pay for your living expenses?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If <u>yes</u>, count the teenager and any of her children as a separate household. • If <u>no</u>, ask the next question.
Do you live with your parents or other adults who support you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If <u>yes</u>, count all persons supported by the income. • If <u>no</u>, ask the next question.
Do you live with your parents or other adults and work and pay for your room and board?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If <u>yes</u>, count the teenager and any of her children as a separate household. • If <u>no</u>, count all persons supported by the income.

Household with pregnant women

Determine household size for households with pregnant women using the directions in the table below.

Step	Action
1	Increase her household size by the number of expected births.
2	Assess her income eligibility using the adjusted household size.
3	Use the adjusted household size for other members of the household applying for WIC and record the adjusted household size in the data system.

Notes:

- If a pregnant woman does not want the fetus to be counted as a member of the household due to cultural, personal, or religious beliefs, do not adjust the household size.
- The Iowa Medicaid Program uses the same standard regarding adjusted family size for multiple births.